

What is the Shanghai / Hangzhou Autumn University?

The Autumn University is the result of a cooperation agreement in the field of history signed in 2004 between the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme (MSH) in Paris and the Chinese Society for the Study of French History (Société Chinoise d'Études de l'Histoire de France: SCEHF), with the aim of strengthening scientific relations with Europe and France, and training young historians in an atmosphere of international exchange. Thanks to the support of the East China Normal University (Shanghai) and Zhejiang University (Hangzhou), the Autumn University enjoyed its first successes in summer 2004 and autumn 2005.

In 2006, alongside the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, the University of Paris 1 became a new partner: a significant milestone for our Autumn University. In December 2005, following negotiations with Paris 1 and the MSH, the SCEHF signed a five-year cooperation agreement with these two institutions to organize an Autumn University in history for young Chinese researchers and teachers working on France and Europe. This was the first time that Pierre-Yves Hénin, President of Paris 1, had signed an agreement with a non-governmental scientific association. Since then, the Autumn University, a cooperative project between SCEHF, MSH and Paris 1, has developed positively, with occasional links to other countries. We were able to invite a Russian specialist in 2005, an Italian professor in 2006, a German professor and a Japanese professor in 2007.

To facilitate understanding and exchanges on both sides, Mr. Roger Wei, a highly competent interpreter, has been invited by the MSH for our Autumn University. The two local partners are the East China Normal University (Shanghai) and Zhejiang University (Hangzhou).

The Autumn University is managed by two committees: Maurice Aymard and Duanmu Mei are Co-Chairmen of the Scientific Committee, and Hugues Tertrais and Feng Shaolei are Co-Chairmen of the Autumn University Organizing Committee. Under the leadership of the two Committees, we were able to put together another project on Europe in addition to the Autumn University: in April 2007, an international colloquium on the experience of regional construction: dialogue between Asia and Europe - celebrating the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Treaties of Rome - was held in Guangzhou with great success. We were able to invite six French professors, an Italian, an Austrian and an Englishwoman. Mr. Serge Abou, the European Union's ambassador to China, spoke at our symposium.

The University's fourth session, in September 2007, was special in four respects: 1). With the participation of a Japanese, it was the first time a non-Chinese Asian had been invited. 2). Outside Shanghai-Hangzhou, it was the first time we had also worked in Jinhua, the other city in Zhejiang. 3). For the first time also, two PhD students from Paris came to meet our PhD students in Shanghai. 4). Finally, thanks to the efforts of our French colleagues, we were able to distribute scholarships for the first time to 17 participants from other cities or regions: Heilongjiang, Canton, Beijing, Tianjin, Xuzhou (Jiangsu), Jinan (Shandong), Jinhua, Hangzhou and one from Paris.

In September 2008, the fifth session marked the final year of the first agreement signed by MSH, Paris 1 and SCEHF in 2004/2005. A major event was organized in Shanghai to close the first agreement and announce the renewal of the framework cooperation agreement. The Shanghai event was structured in three parts: training, via the Autumn University; professorial colloquium; and the writers' dialogue (ALIBI).

Many more years of good cooperation.....

Since 2004, some 160 European researchers in the humanities and social sciences (mainly from France, then Switzerland and other countries such as Italy, Russia, Germany, Austria and Poland) have been invited by the Chinese Society for the Study of the History of France to spend five to seven days at East China Normal University (ECNU) in Shanghai and Zhejiang University in Hangzhou, teaching and engaging in dialogue with Chinese professors and students.

Over the past 18 sessions, the themes have been diverse and interdisciplinary (history, political science, anthropology, sociology, international relations, sinology, etc.). Over a thousand history students and young professors from all over the country (including regions such as Shanghai, Beijing, Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Fujian and Guangdong, as well as Tibet, Sichuan, northeast China and even Taiwan) have taken part in the training provided by European academics. Between 2007 and 2015, over three hundred of them received grants from the French Embassy, the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme in Paris and the University of Fribourg (Switzerland) to attend the Autumn University in Shanghai. Over three hundred other Chinese students have benefited from itinerant teaching by European academics outside Shanghai and Hangzhou. For example, Jinhua, Huzhou, Nanjing and Guangzhou. Over twenty people studied in France through this Autumn University. Several PhD students who returned to China after their studies in France have become a major force in academic teaching in their respective units. For example, Mr. Zhuang Hezhong from Guizhou University, Ms. Xiao Qi from East China Normal University, Mr. Zhang Zhi from Fudan University, Mr. Li Yingliang from South China Normal University, Ms. Lv Zhao from Tsinghua University, Mr. Yang Guang of the Institute of World History of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Ms. Sun Yiping of Shandong University, Ms. Zhou Lihong of Zhongshan University, etc.

We are convinced that the Sino-French-Swiss Autumn University in History is a highly successful example of international cooperation.

This report has been prepared by Duanmu Mei